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ABSTRACT

Individuals mostly write texts which are directed to other persons, the readers. Even though individuals cannot rely on immediate reactions, as in spoken dialogue, they are nevertheless able to communicate successfully with them. A writing experiment focused on the role of the addressee in the writing process. Writers grouped in pairs were asked to write different types of texts (applications, refusals, and computer manuals) together that varied according to the intended audience. The three tasks were chosen because they represent different requirements for the writers since they create different writer-audience relationships and establish different discourse communities. The writers were advanced students and PhD students of Bielefeld University (Germany). The interactions in these collaborative writing groups were taped on video, transcribed, and analyzed; the focus in this paper is on writing computer manuals. One result that can be deduced from the empirical data is that writers use different techniques to construct an image of their addressee. Which technique they use depends on the writer but also on the respective writing problem in which the reference to the addressee is embedded. Includes 2 tables. Contains a 26-item bibliography. (NKA)

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Writing for the Addressee.

By Kirsten Schindler

Paper presented at the Writing Development for Higher Education Conference, Leicester, England, April 16-17, 2002.

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Writing for the Addressee

SUMMARY

We mostly write texts which are directed to other persons, our readers. Even though we can not rely on immediate reactions, as in spoken dialogue, we are nevertheless able to communicate successfully with them. How do we succeed in doing that? In this article[1], I will present the results of a writing experiment, which focused on the role of the addressee in the writing process. Writers grouped in pairs were asked to write different types of texts together that varied according to the intended audience. The interactions in these collaborative writing groups were taped on video, transcribed and analysed. One result that can be deduced from the empirical data is that writers use different techniques to construct an image of their addressee. Which technique they use depends on the writer but also on the respective writing problem in which the reference to the addressee is embedded.

INTRODUCTION

The study of 'audience' is a central concept in writing research. The demand of addressing an audience is a crucial stage in communicating successfully in most professional areas. The same applies to the difficulties writers have encounter when realising this demand in their text production. In its long history (see Willey, 1990) the concept of audience has not only been widely discussed both theoretically and methodologically (Ong, 1975; Bonk, 1990; Nystrand, 1989 and 1990; Ede and Lunsford, 1984 and 1996), but also concerning different pedagogical approaches that relate to teaching audience awareness to writers (Flower, 1989; Schriver, 1992; Alexander, 1999). By focusing on the audience as an essential part of the actual writing process, we still have to consider a substantial lack of empirical studies as Kirsch illustrates in an article from 1990 (Kirsch, 1990, p. 216). Since then, not much has changed (see the exceptional studies: Berkenkotter, 1981; Porter and O'Sullivan, 1999; Hyland, 2001). This seems to be a direct consequence of the fact that the lively debate about 'audience' in the context of writing theory and didactics ebbed away at the beginning

[1] The article dates from a presentation hold at the WDHE (Writing Development in Higher Education) in Leicester, April 2002. I'd like to thank Eva Belke and Tanja Bültmann for their comments and critical remarks.

of the 1990s. We still don't know precisely how writers experience audience, or to be more precise, the addressee in their writing process. How important is the addressee when performing different writing tasks, how do writers construct an image of their addressee and in which situations writers refer to the addressee (for a distinction of the terms audience, addressee and reader, see Schindler, 2001)?

An empirical investigation would have to consider these questions and should focus on the role of the addressee in the writing process to deduce writing strategies, procedures and difficulties writers have. This was the initial motivation for the present writing experiment, which was carried out at the Department of Linguistics of the university of Bielefeld between 2000 and 2001 (see Schindler, 2003). The semi-experimental study was based on a qualitative approach, because the observed writing processes should be described in detail. The study controlled several aspects of writing. For instance, different degrees of experience in writing were examined, to investigate more closely the claim that writing competence and audience awareness are linked and interact (Bereiter and Scardamalia, 1987).

In this article, I will present the first findings of the empirical research that was conducted. One result is that writers use different proceedings and strategies to cope with the idea of an addressee. While the proceedings are connected to the writing problems which are solved, the strategies depend on the writers and their knowledge. The article will conclude with some ideas for the didactic of writing.

AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY

Pairs of writers who knew each other well were asked to write texts together in an semi-experimental setting, i.e. letters of application, letters of refusal and manuals for computer games. The writing scene was taped on video by two cameras. One camera was put up in front of the writers to record their interaction and the other was put up behind them to record the production of the text. The task was twofold. Not only should the writers write the text that was demanded, they should also write it together. The specific form of collaborative writing (Ede and Lunsford, 1990), where all group members are constantly present and share the responsibility during the writing process and the text product, is an effective tool for writing research (see Dausendschön-Gay and Krafft, 1999; Lehnen, 2000). Since the group members have to or-

'ganise their writing and negotiate the writing decisions with each other, their internal discussions become explicit and transparent (see Sharples, 1999, chapter 11).

The writers were advanced students and PhD-students of Bielefeld University. As such, they are competent writers who are experienced in scientific writing, but have no or very poor knowledge of the demanded genres (writing applications, refusals and manuals). That should guarantee that the writers were able to produce such a text, but, at the same time, could not have developed routines and text patterns that they might use easily. It was necessary for them to negotiate with each other the very different aspects of their writing.

The three tasks were chosen because they represent different requirements for the writers since they create different writer-audience relationships and establish different discourse communities (regards the term discourse community see Bizzell 1994). One of the questions of the empirical research has been, therefore, to compare writing strategies regards different task performances. The article will concentrate on one of the tasks, i.e. writing a manual for a computer game together (see for the two other tasks: Schindler, 2000; Lehnen and Schindler, 2001) and will not include observations, which emerged from a comparison between the three tasks chosen.

WRITING A MANUAL

Writers were confronted with a computer game which was already installed and started on a computer. First of all, the writers should make themselves familiar with the game since no further explications were provided. The games chosen, i.e. Mahjongg (http://home.t-online.de/home/ufo-ms/mahjongg/index.htm) and i.b.spider (http://www.geocities.com/eddyware/ibspider.htm), were relatively easy to understand although the description and explanation of the game was challenging regards a number of features. To make sure that writers were able to understand the game properly and to thereby establish a sufficient basis for writing their manual, the writing groups were composed in such a way that at least one participant was experienced in playing computer games. The degree of experience with computer games (as well as the writing experience) had been obtained on the basis of an independent questionnaire that participants were asked to complete before the experiment started. Having familiarized with the game, the writers were asked to write a manual for it. Half of the pairs were asked to write a manual for people over 50, whereas the other

'pairs had to write a manual for children in grammar school. By referring explicitly to the age of the intended audiences in their description, writers should become aware that the task was to write the manual for a very specific audience. Thus, the quality of the text was directly linked to its being adequate in view of the intended readers. To accomplish their task, the writers could use any programme installed on the computer (i.e. different word and picture processing) as well as pen and pencil.

Depending on the intended audience, writers were presented with either Mahjongg (people over 50) or i.b.spider (children in grammer school). This assignment of the games to audience groups was chosen to provide a direct correspondence with alleged preferences in the respective age groups, as they had been found in a pre-test with different games and audiences. The writers of the pre-test group were asked to make the writing task as realistic as possible and to choose a game and an audience which are suitable. In addition, a control group with four pairs of participants was included to evaluate the influence of the computer game (for the combination of pairs see table one).

Table 1: Combination of computer game and intended audience

Group Status	Game	Intended Audience	participated Groups
Experimental Group	Mahjongg	People over 50	5
	i.b.spider	Children in grammar school	5
Control Group	Mahjongg	Children in grammar school	2
	i.b.spider	People over 50	2

SPEAKING ABOUT THE ADDRESSEE – TWO DIFFERENT PROCEEDINGS

The addressee is an important subject in the discussions of the writers. By analysing the interactions more precisely, it can be seen that writers use different proceedings to construct an addressee for themselves and their writing partner.

Referring to a concept

When writers speak about their addressee, they construct a concept together, a virtual reader. They refer to categories, category-bound activities and characteristic features of their addressee. Emma and Katja, two students, have the task to write a

manual for children in grammar school. After they have enumerated characteristics of the game and collected them on a draft paper, they start to think about first formulations (the examples are originally in German, but were translated into English; see the conventions for transliteration in Selting, 1998).

```
01 K:   [will we address/] the person/ ((laughing)) er the/ the child
02      directly maybe yes
03 E:   hm yeah
04 K:   might be quite nice hm, maybe
05 E:   if you start ibspider
06 K:   hang on wait a second er in primary/ ((looks on the paper, where
07      the tasks is explained))
08 E:   yes;
09 K:   we have to create very simple sentences
10 E:   yes:a
11 K:   they cannot really read much yet
12 E:   yes:a but they can
13 K:   I meant relatively simple sentences
14 E:   that's nele; ((smiles))
15 K:   right;
```

Katja refers to the addressee by using certain category names ("the person", "the child", "in primary"); then she suggests to draw consequences, the reader will have to be addressed directly and very simple sentences will have to be created. She refers to the estimated reading competence of children to explain her suggestion ("they cannot really read much yet"). However, this estimation is modified by Emma ("yes:a but they can"). They agree on a compromise by using a more narrowly defined estimation ("relatively simple sentences"). Emma illustrates this by an example referring to classical phrases of primers ("that's nele"). The two writers arguing with each other about their views on the addressee. They manage to find a solution, which is acceptable for both of them and influences the writing decisions they are to take in the following. Speaking about the addressee takes place to ground the text. They establish the addressee by showing that he is different from the writer, that there is a gap between one's own competence and that of the addressee. In that way, they assign a divergence of perspectives.

Another group, Vivian and Marc, who also write for children in grammar school, shows that writers possess also another procedure of integrating the addressee in their discussion. Vivian and Marc have already decided that they wanted to call an element of the game i.b.spider "drop of water", although it is a very schematic design of a drop of water.

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```
01 V:   I don't know maybe/ well I think it's (.)
02      if pictures are there because the thing with the
03      drops of water/ a child imagines such a drop of water ((paints
04      a drop in the air))that drop-shaped
05 M:   yes:; let's do it now/
```

Vivian argues that integrating a screen shot in their manual will ensure that children can understand the formulation "drop of water". She explains her proposition by the knowledge of children imaging a drop of water as "drop shaped". Marc accepts her proposition. Contrary to Emma und Katja, Vivian adopts the perspective of a child, imagining a child's reaction. Therefore, the argumentation is based upon the own perspective of the addressee.

In both examples talking about the addressee refers not to a person, but reflects concepts the writers have in mind. The addressee is characterised through assumptions of general concepts, for instance his competence, his knowledge but also (in other examples) his taste, the attended practice of playing the game and reading/using the manual.

Referring to a person

Kay and Alexandra who are also writing a manual for children, think about possible ways to motivate their addressee to continue to play the game i.b.spider.

```
01 K:   you enter the jungle of the amazon
02 A:   or one could say that a surprise waits for you at the end;
03      we don't know it anyway ((laughs))
04 K:   << lengthened >hm> then they'll always continue to play
05 A:   then they'll actually play
06 K:   did you make it; yes; (4) ((A writes)) although er if a
07      a child of my age sits there and doesn't manage to make it; then
08      you'll be completely frustrated if it says << significantly un
09      stressed >at the end a surprise will be waiting for you>
10 A:   (-) er ((shrugs shoulders)) that's always like that with super
11      mario he'll also have to in the end he'll get the princess
12 K:   yes but somehow/ it would have to be extra-difficult
13      and probably don't work but if you make it anyway
14      something will be there for you
```

Because they are insecure about the game's process (they were not able to run the game through its finish), they decide to use the unspecified word "surprise" to characterise the goal. After they have given a chapter for their statement to one another, Kay criticises their formulation. Due to her own experience as a child, it is rather frustrating to know that one could achieve a surprise, but does not succeed in doing so.

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After a short negotiation the writers decide to emphasise that it is rather difficult and nearly impossible to reach the finish.

Kay refers to herself as the addressee when she was a child. The reference to the addressee relates to the decision about the formulation at first, but it goes beyond that. With her reference, Kay evokes a more concrete image about the situation. This scene makes it necessary to rethink the way the motivation should be put into words.

In the next example two writers, Simon and Michael, are formulating a text for people over 50. Simon proposes a formulation for describing the necessary condition for a specific stone (in the game Mahjongg) to be played.

```
01 S:   with two sides of a stone that form a corner/ but no one
02      can understand this
03 M:   THAT'S just what I wanted to say we need to make a
04      Picture (7) ((leans back)) well I mean
05      [the thing with the peop/]
06 S:   [two meeting sides] ((also leans back))
07 M:   people from 50; I imagine at home I put up
08      this laptop at the next family gathering
09 S:   yours
10 M:   on the table
11 S:   and your parents
12 M:   and my parents and my grandmother and some aunts ((S sucks air))
13      sits there
14 S:   do it
15 M:   and I want to explain it, THAT paper I would THEN have to
16      give to them so that they/ could briefly read it
17      (.) that's something we would need ((bends back over the laptop ))
18 S:   yes yes that's perfectly clear
```

After proposing his formulation Simon evaluates it immediately as unsuccessful. Michael ratifies that and plead for a picture. Subsequently, Michael begins to develop an imagined scene, a family reunion where older relatives, like parents, aunts and the grand-mother come together and try to play the game Mahjongg. He embeds the reading of the manual in this scene. Here, as well as in the previous example the thinking and the decision process about the formulation relocates the writing activities towards goal setting and planning. That the writers do something different can also be seen in examining their gestures. They lean back from the computer when imagining this scene, and they bend back towards the laptop at that moment when they concentrate again at their formulation work.

Writers refer to a concept of readers as well as to persons they know. Which of these proceedings they choose seems to be related to their actual writing process. The use is task-specific. When writers have to take concrete writing decisions (like formulation

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decisions) they normally do that subject to their (common) knowledge about their addressee, i.e. they refer to particular (virtual) characteristics. Whenever such a decision cannot be taken because the common knowledge cannot be implied or is not sufficient, writers develop an image of their addressee by referring to persons they know and situations they can visualise.
Writers also have certain strategies at their disposal which they use consciously according to specific writing decisions. These strategies are strongly related to different types of writers.

GLOBAL-ADDRESSEE AND LOCAL-ADDRESSEE ORIENTED WRITERS

Writers have to cope with several insecurities regards their addressee. The description "children in grammar school" for instance does not reveal the degree of knowledge children may have of computer games, the use of the keyboard or computer specific vocabulary. Writers deal differently with these insecurities and they decide locally or globally about certain assumptions. In general, writers can – in the frame of the experimental study – be described as local-addressee oriented or as global-addressee oriented. This will be explained by looking at computer specific vocabulary.
Vivian and Marc are in the middle of their text production and think about using the word "click".

```
01 M:   hm=hm, (4) at 'primary-pupil age' would they know the meaning of
02      click?
03 V:   yes:;
04 M:   yes:?
05 V:   yes of course;
06 M:   well I don't know (--) well (--) anyway
07 V:   so you won't explain it for children who've never seen a computer
08      I suppose, or do you?
09 M:   at 'primary-pupil age' first to fourth year
10 V:   << firmly >yes:,>
11 M:   well I don't know (--) it's the nintendo gene << stresses >ration>
12      therefore (.) so
13 V:   okay:; I think we'll do it with click on
```

Marc thinks about on the addressee's knowledge about the word "click", which is called "klicken" in German and was obviously borrowed from English. The word clearly relates to computers and thus, Marc doubts whether children in primary school will understand it, if they haven't had contact with computers yet. Contrary to

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'that, Vivian is convinced that children will be able to understand the word. After a short negotiation, Vivian redefines the addressee i.e. that text shall only address children who have already worked or played with a computer ("so you won't explain it for children who've never seen a computer"). The initial description "children in grammar school" is narrowed down to a certain part of this group, namely children who are familiar with computers. Although Marc is still not convinced, he accepts this alternation after a while, labelling the addressee as part of the "nintendo generation".
Vivian and Marc keep to maintain that decision and they construct their addressee in an appropriate way for their text production process and maintained it for the whole writing process that is to follow. The estimation about the addressee's competences are discussed globally in this case. Martin and Simon also predefine certain prerequisites, even though their view about their addressee is rather negative.

```
01 S:   ((looks on the task)) but why people over 50?
02 M:   ((pours himself something to drink)) it could also say people
03      with no knowledge of computers
04 S:   << p >listen>
05 M:   well that's a mean assumption but (8) ((drinks, looks
06      towards the screen, at the task)) yES
07 S:   yes: (--) ((looks at M)) then I suggest prerequisites (.)
08      for example something like (.) erm they become acquainted with the
09      situation presented here, thus the game has already opened, the
10      computer has already been put on and they also know er in
11      how far this ((nods towards the mouse)) funny
12      plastic-box is related to the cursor
13 M:   hm (---) yes I think if we explain to them beforehand how to
14      power up the computer, that would be too far off
```

Martin suggests that "people with no knowledge of computers" is an equivalent description for "people over 50". Although this assumption is very clear and would have made it necessary to explain computer specific aspects of the computer game in a very detailed way, both decide against it and suggest certain prerequisites. They imagine a reception scene ("game has opened", "computer already put on") and previous knowledge about certain tools such as the mouse and the cursor. Martin explains their decision by referring to the limitations of writing they might encounter ("that would be too far off"). They are (because of the limited time) not able to achieve a manual integrating people with no knowledge of computers. Later in their talk they discuss their assumption again. Simon gives one more reason for their definition of the addressee by referring to manuals for text production programmes, which also do not explain basic computer skills. To suggest certain prerequisites is not only a question of time, but also of genre specific demands.

Both groups decide explicitly about the available characteristics of their addressee. They give an idea about different text resources they use and from where their decision emerges such as genre specific knowledge, limitations regards time and other circumstances or estimations about specific characteristics related to age.

Anna and Thomas, who are writing a text for children, do not know whether "cursor key" is an appropriate choice for their text.

```
01 T:   this is er a little spider with the help of or/ with the help of
02      the cursor key
03 A:   erm
04 T:   a spider i b spider
05 A:   but cu/
06 T:   [with the help of]
07 A:   [children know]
08      what the cursor key does or with the up-down key/ with the
09      arrow keys
10 T:   arrow keys are everywhere ((points at the keyboard))
11 A:   so we use cursor and assume that they'll know it,
12      so
13 T:   that has to be described like that
```

In this example Anna expounds the problem of the word "cursor key" and whether it is understandable for children. She also makes two alternative propositions ("up-down key" and "arrow key"). Thomas, who seems to understand her point of view, does not accept her alternatives. He assumes that the alternatives are not specific enough because there are a number of arrow keys on the keyboard. As a result, the compromise of the two writers is to use the word "cursor key" hoping that it will be understandable. Thomas idea to describe the key in detail terminates their discussion (it is also not realised in their text at a later stage). In consequence, they use computer specific vocabulary in their text which contradicts earlier assumptions. Previously, Anna and Thomas had already discussed computer specific knowledge of their addressee, coming to the conclusion that children might never have seen a computer or a computer game (in the context of their actual writing problem, it resulted in the requirement not to compare the game i.b.spider with any other computer game).

In local-addressee oriented writing groups the writers also decide about certain assumptions, but the way they do it differs considerably from global-addressee oriented writing groups. They decide about their addressee according to the actual and concrete writing decision taken. The addressee is established locally. Writers can make different assumptions about the same competences at different times of their writing.

They do not clearly redefine their addressee according to their text production process, but rather try to integrate different concepts of the addressee at the same time (addressees with no, few or a lot knowledge about computer games). A remarkable observation is that local-addressee oriented writers are much more insecure about the correctness of their estimations and have more problems in monitoring their writing process. One possible difficulty according to the quality of the written product lies in the coherence of the addressee concept. Writers seem to lack a clear image about their addressee, which may well be mirrored through their text.

The two types of writing groups differ according the place the addressee is localised in their text production process. While the local-addressee oriented writers use the addressee mostly as a tool for revision, the global-addressee oriented writers integrate the thinking about the addressee already in their planning procedures.
Whether writers behave as local-addressee oriented or global-addressee oriented is a question of experience, i.e. experience with computer games in particular (and not so much of writing experience). The writers that are highly experienced with computer games are able to adjust their manual to the intended audience. They can understand the game more quickly, establish a text model for their manual more rapidly and are able to vary this according to their addressee. The groups where the experience with computer games is less available have more difficulties to write the manual, although they also understand the game. These writers are less experienced with the genre as passive recipients and have to establish common criteria for their text first. Their adjustment towards the addressee is a junior demand in their text production process. This observation is not dependent on the computer game that was chosen and can be seen in both the experimental and the control group (see Table 2). This clearly provides some interesting input for the following research, particularly quantitative analysis by paired comparisons of writing groups, testing, for instance, the differences between groups with unequal computer game experience and groups where the computer game experience between the writers is rather equal).

Table 2: Connections between writing type and computer game experience

Group Type	Writing Type	Game Experience	Number of Groups	Games
Experimental Group	Local-Addressee	Low and average	4	3 Mahjongg 1 i.b.spider
	Global-Addressee	High	6	2 Mahjongg 4 i.b.spider
Control Group	Local-Addressee	Low	2	2 Mahjongg
	Global-Addressee	High	2	2 i.b.spider

CONCLUSION: SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR WRITING DIDACTICS

Collaborative writing makes it necessary for the writers to interact with each other, to discuss certain questions about their writing, to decide about formulation and to negotiate whether certain prerequisites should be assumed in the reader or not. Collaborative writing is therefore an effective tool for research. Through the discussions the writers lead, implicit norms and rules of the text production process are formulated, as it was shown by the examples of the present study. In this sense collaborative writing is also an effective tool for writing didactic, because writers have to argue with each other, they have to find reasons for certain decisions, and they therefore, reflect their writing process more actively (see also Lehnen, 2000). According to the teaching of audience awareness, it is a particularly effective tool. In the collaborative writing groups the roles of writer and reader/recipient are established naturally. The writers change perspectives easily. One person is the writer according his own formulation, but also a reader of the formulations of his writing partner at the same time. To adopt the perspective of a child or an elderly person is just a small additional requirement.

To conclude, I'd like to formulate some learning targets for writers (and writing teachers) to support the awareness of audiences.

- Writers should realise that the "audience" is not an easy concept at all and that it interacts with different other concepts of text production. These other concepts are e.g. the writing context, the discourse community and its established style of communication, the writer's goals, the addressee examples he has at

his own disposal, but also the conventionalised solutions for certain writing tasks.

- Additionally writers should be confronted with the idea that there is not one audience for a text, but a variety of different readers, who have different ideas as to why they read and use the text (as Ong, 1975, points out; see also Purves, 1984).
- Writers should therefore, become aware that they can use different proceedings to imagine and to construct their view about an audience.
- Despite this complexity, writers should be strongly encouraged to define an addressee for themselves according to their possibilities (such as limitations of time and writing space), their writing goals and the plausibility of audiences. They should integrate their addressee in the planning of their text, they should situate the addressee in a possible context and a situation they picture. They should translate these characteristics in a coherent image of their addressee which is transparent through the whole text.

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